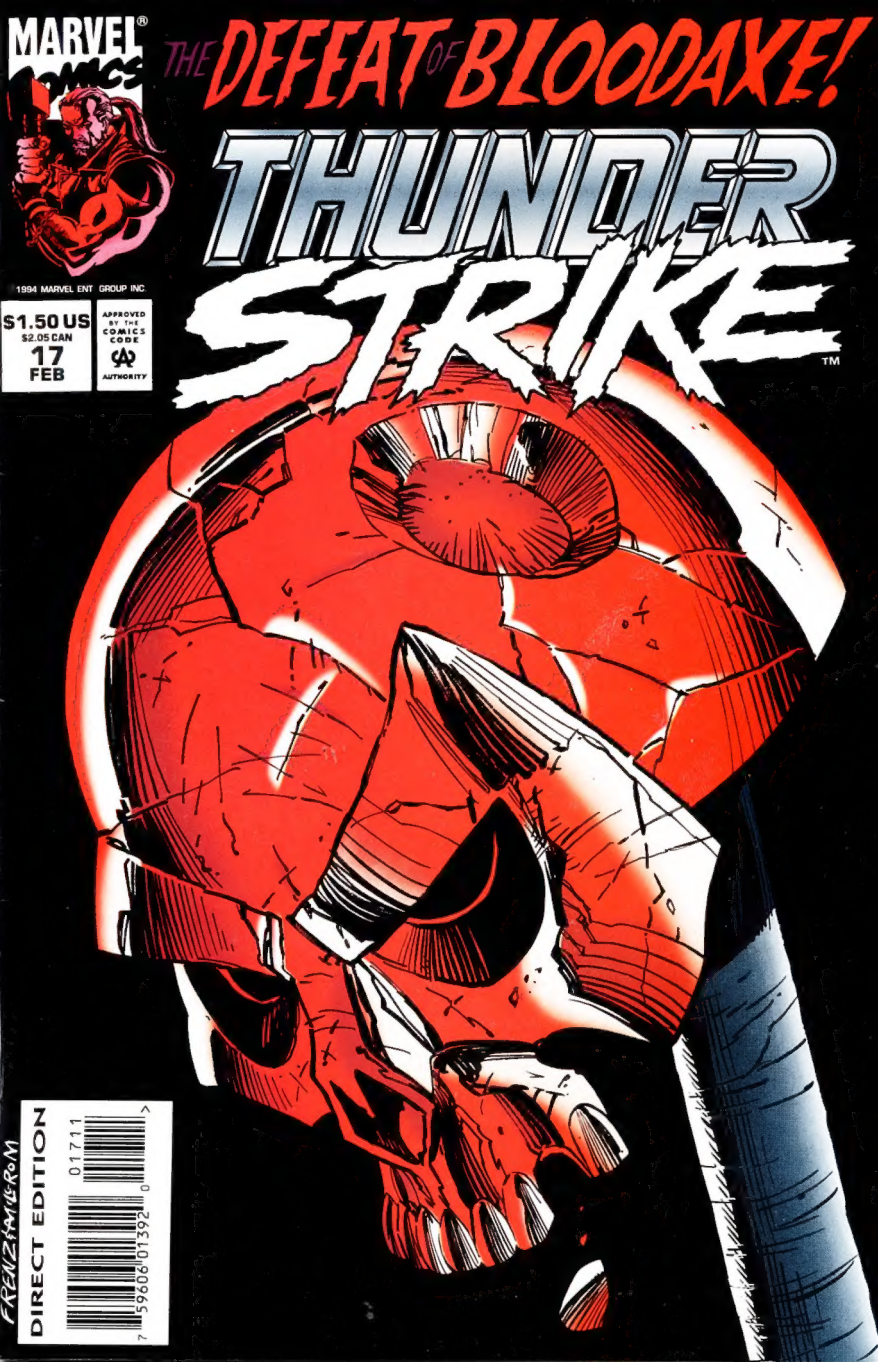
MARVEL COMICS
THE DEFEAT OF BLOODAXE!
THUNDERSTRIKE
1994 MARVEL ENT GROUP INC
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FEB
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DIRECT EDITION
FRENZ/MILROM

*WHEN ARCHITECT **ERIC MASTERSON** STAMPS HIS WOODEN WALKING STICK UPON THE GROUND, IT IS TRANSFORMED INTO A MYSTICAL WEAPON CALLED **THUNDERSTRIKE!** ARMED WITH INCREDIBLE POWERS, MASTERSON WORKS TO PROVE THAT ONE MAN MUST MAKE A DIFFERENCE, BECAUSE THIS WORLD STILL NEEDS HEROES! STAN LEE PRESENTS . . .*

THUNDERSTRIKE!

THE WAGES OF SIN!

WARNING! THIS TALE IS ONLY TWELVE PAGES IN LENGTH, BUT WE MAY HAVE ACCIDENTALLY GONE OVER THE LEGAL LIMIT OF ACTION AND ANGST! PROCEED AT YOUR OWN RISK!
ABANDON ALL HOPE! EXPECT NO MERCY!
I AM BLOODAXE-- AND DEATH IS ALL THAT AWAITS YOU!
A MOST PAINFUL AND UNPLEASANT DEATH!

RON FRENZ & TOM DEFALCO
PENCILS, PLOT & SCRIPT

AL MILGROM
FINISHED ART

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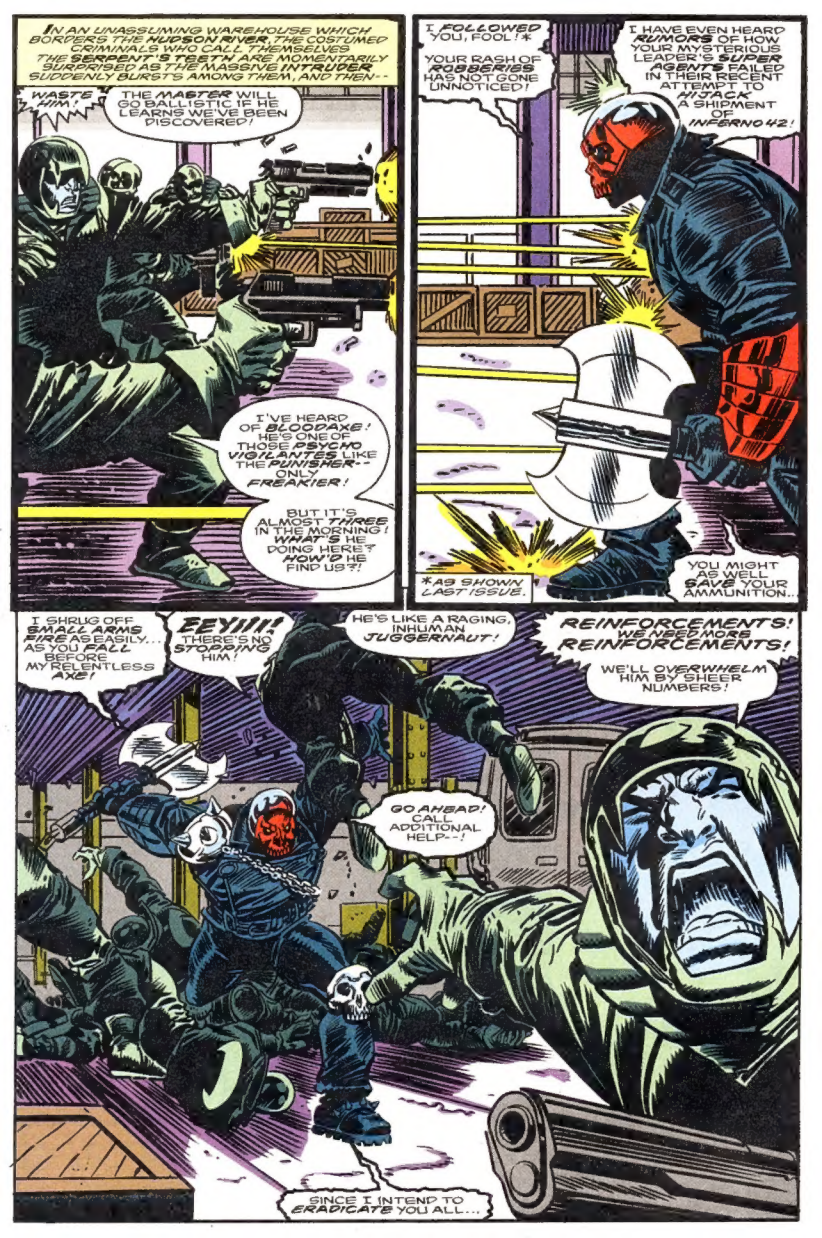
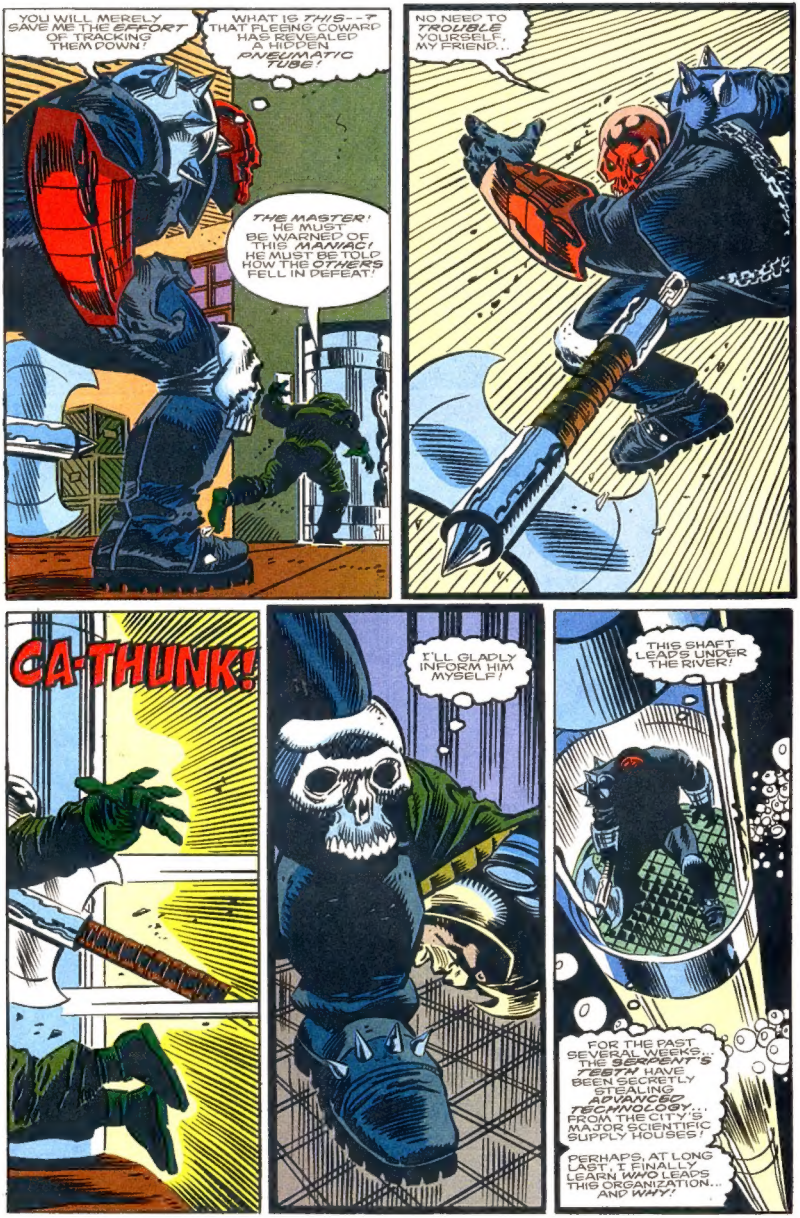
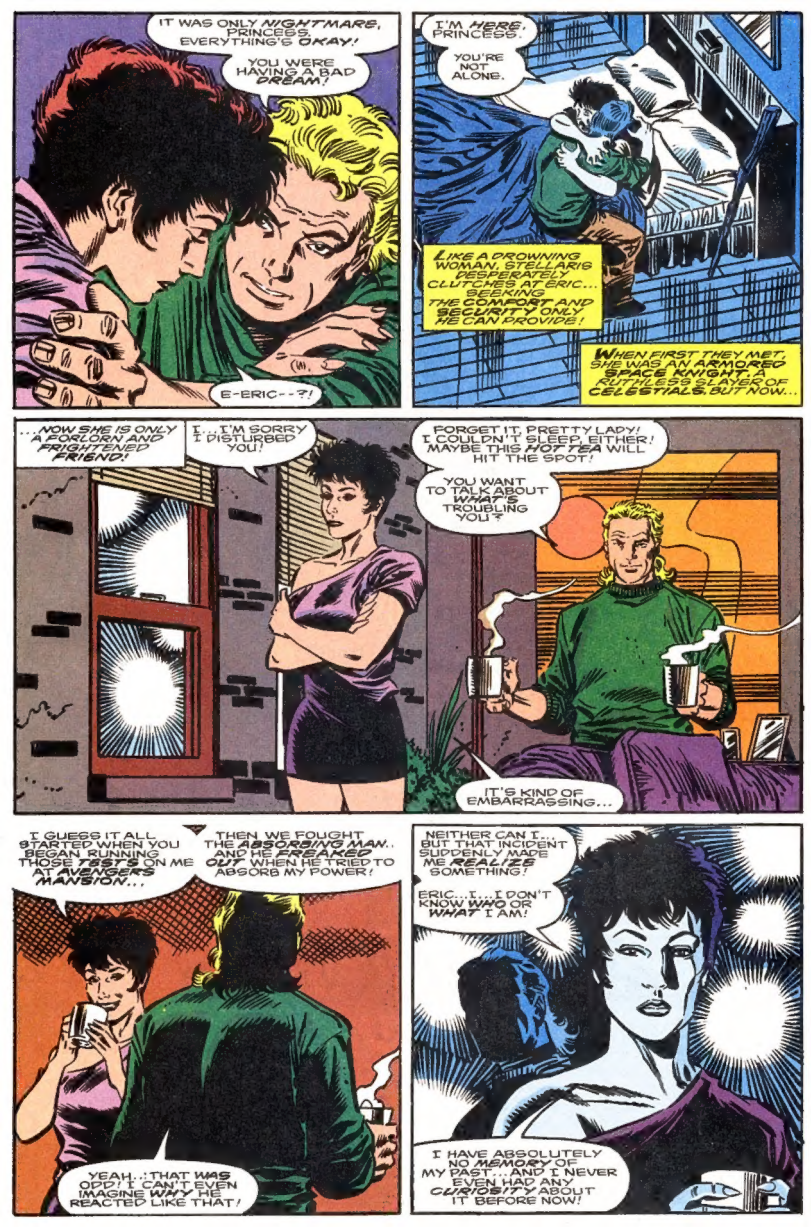

IN AN UNASSUMING WAREHOUSE WHICH BORDERS THE HUDSON RIVER, THE COSTUMED CRIMINALS WHO CALL THEMSELVES THE SERGEANT'S TEETH ARE MOMENTARILY SURPRISED AS THE MASSIVE INTRUDER SUDDENLY BURSTS AMONG THEM, AND THEN--
WASTE HIM!
THE MASTER WILL GO BALLISTIC IF HE LEARNS WE'VE BEEN DISCOVERED!
I'VE HEARD OF BLOODAXE! HE'S ONE OF THOSE PSYCHO VIGILANTES LIKE THE PUNISHER-- ONLY FREAKIER!
BUT IT'S ALMOST THREE IN THE MORNING! WHAT'S HE DOING HERE? HOW'D HE FIND US?!
I FOLLOWED YOU, FOOL!*
YOUR RASH OF ROBBERIES HAS NOT GONE UNNOTICED!
I HAVE EVEN HEARD RUMORS OF HOW YOUR MYSTERIOUS LEADER'S SUPER AGENTS FAILED IN THEIR RECENT ATTEMPT TO HIJACK A SHIPMENT OF INFERNO 42!
*AS SHOWN LAST ISSUE.
YOU MIGHT AS WELL SAVE YOUR AMMUNITION...
I SHRUG OFF SMALL ARMS FIRE AS EASILY... AS YOU FALL BEFORE MY RELENTLESS AXE!
EEYIII! THERE'S NO STOPPING HIM!
HE'S LIKE A RAGING, INHUMAN JUGGERNAUT!
REINFORCEMENTS! WE NEED MORE REINFORCEMENTS!
WE'LL OVERWHELM HIM BY SHEER NUMBERS!
GO AHEAD! CALL ADDITIONAL HELP--!
SINCE I INTEND TO ERADICATE YOU ALL...


YOU WILL MERELY SAVE ME THE EFFORT OF TRACKING THEM DOWN!
WHAT IS THIS--? THAT FLEEING COWARD HAS REVEALED A HIDDEN PNEUMATIC TUBE!
THE MASTER! HE MUST BE WARNED OF THIS MANIAC! HE MUST BE TOLD HOW THE OTHERS FELL IN DEFEAT!
NO NEED TO TROUBLE YOURSELF, MY FRIEND...
CA-THUNK!
I'LL GLADLY INFORM HIM MYSELF!
THIS SHAFT LEADS UNDER THE RIVER!
FOR THE PAST SEVERAL WEEKS... THE SERPENT'S TEETH HAVE BEEN SECRETLY STEALING ADVANCED TECHNOLOGY... FROM THE CITY'S MAJOR SCIENTIFIC SUPPLY HOUSES!
PERHAPS, AT LONG LAST, I FINALLY LEARN WHO LEADS THIS ORGANIZATION... AND WHY!

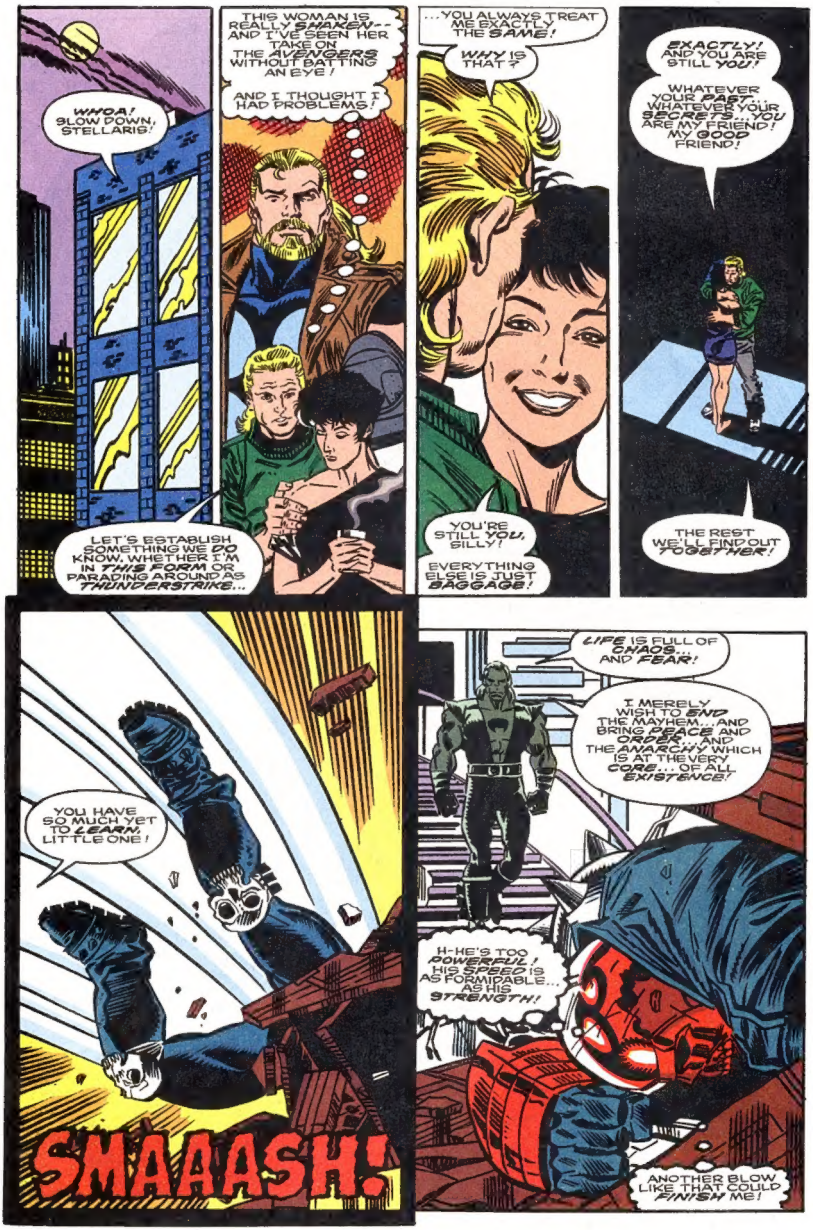
AND, EVEN AS BLOODAXE PLUNGES INTO THE DEPTHS OF THE HUDSON...
WE'LL BRIEFLY LOOK IN ON THE STAR OF OUR MAG, WHO IS PRESENTLY EXPLORING SOME DEPTHS OF HIS OWN!
I... I ALMOST CAN'T BELIEVE THIS IS REALLY HAPPENING! MY SON AND I ARE ABOUT TO BE SEPARATED...
AND IT COULD BE PERMANENT!
BOBBY STEELE IS BEING TRANSFERRED TO THE WEST COAST... AND HE PLANS TO TAKE MY EX-WIFE AND KEVIN WITH HIM!
I FEARED THIS POSSIBILITY WHEN MARCY REMARRIED, AND DEMANDED CUSTODY OF KEVIN, BUT--
NOOO!
THAT SCREAM--!
NOOO!
IT'S STELLARIS!
I KNOW SAM WAS PLANNING A LATE NIGHT AT THE OFFICE!
EITHER SHE'S A HEAVIER SLEEPER THAN I THOUGHT, OR SHE NEVER CAME HOME!
NOOO--!
EASY, LADY--!
TRY TO RELAX!
YOU'RE GOING TO BE FINE!

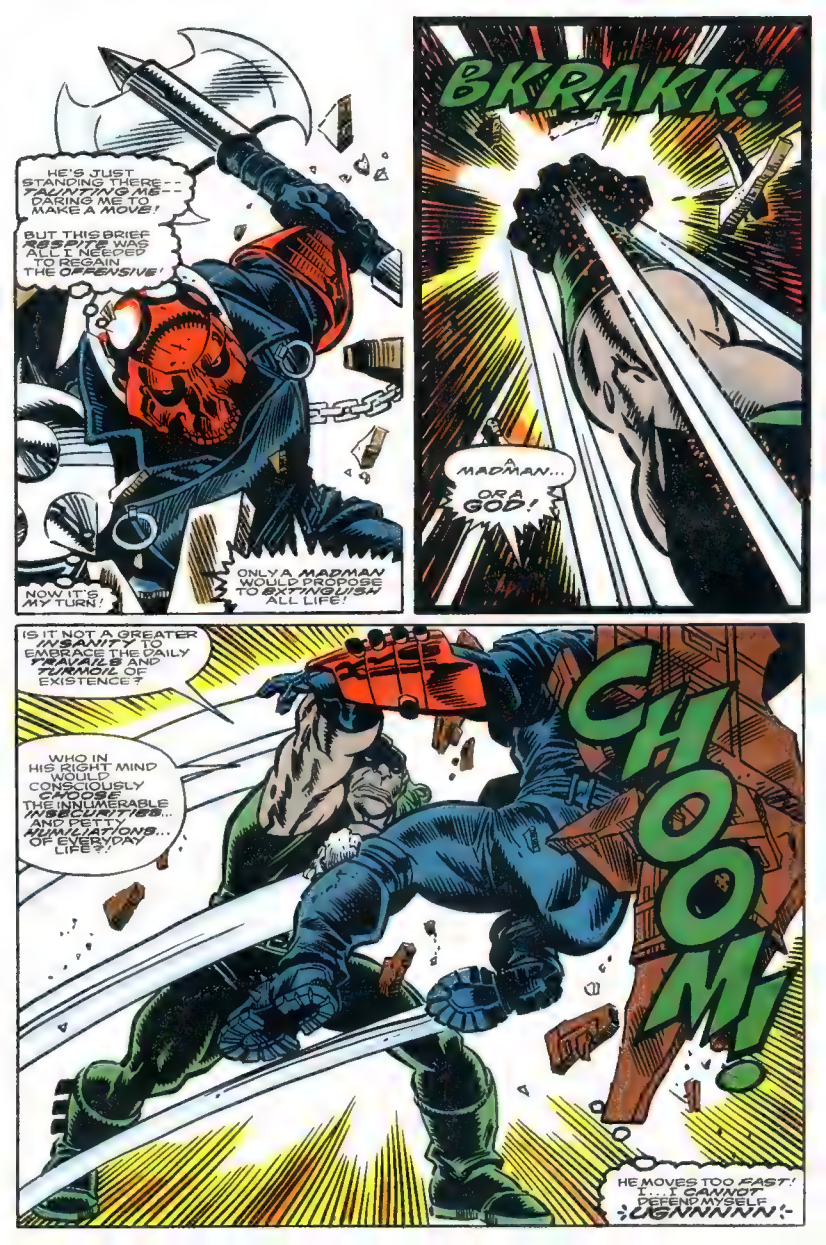

IT WAS ONLY NIGHTMARE, PRINCESS. EVERYTHING'S OKAY!
YOU WERE HAVING A BAD DREAM!
E-ERIC--?!
I'M HERE, PRINCESS.
YOU'RE NOT ALONE.
LIKE A DROWNING WOMAN, STELLARIS DESPERATELY CLUTCHES AT ERIC... SEEKING THE COMFORT AND SECURITY ONLY HE CAN PROVIDE!
WHEN FIRST THEY MET, SHE WAS AN ARMORED SPACE KNIGHT: A RUTHLESS SLAYER OF CELESTIALS. BUT NOW...
...NOW SHE IS ONLY A FORLORN AND FRIGHTENED FRIEND!
I...I'M SORRY I DISTURBED YOU!
FORGET IT, PRETTY LADY! I COULDN'T SLEEP, EITHER! MAYBE THIS HOT TEA WILL HIT THE SPOT!
YOU WANT TO TALK ABOUT WHAT'S TROUBLING YOU?
IT'S KIND OF EMBARRASSING...
I GUESS IT ALL STARTED WHEN YOU BEGAN RUNNING THOSE TESTS ON ME AT AVENGERS MANSION...
THEN WE FOUGHT THE ABSORBING MAN.. AND HE FREAKED OUT WHEN HE TRIED TO ABSORB MY POWER!
YEAH...THAT WAS ODD! I CAN'T EVEN IMAGINE WHY HE REACTED LIKE THAT!
NEITHER CAN I... BUT THAT INCIDENT SUDDENLY MADE ME REALIZE SOMETHING!
ERIC...I...I DON'T KNOW WHO OR WHAT I AM!
I HAVE ABSOLUTELY NO MEMORY OF MY PAST...AND I NEVER EVEN HAD ANY CURIOSITY ABOUT IT BEFORE NOW!

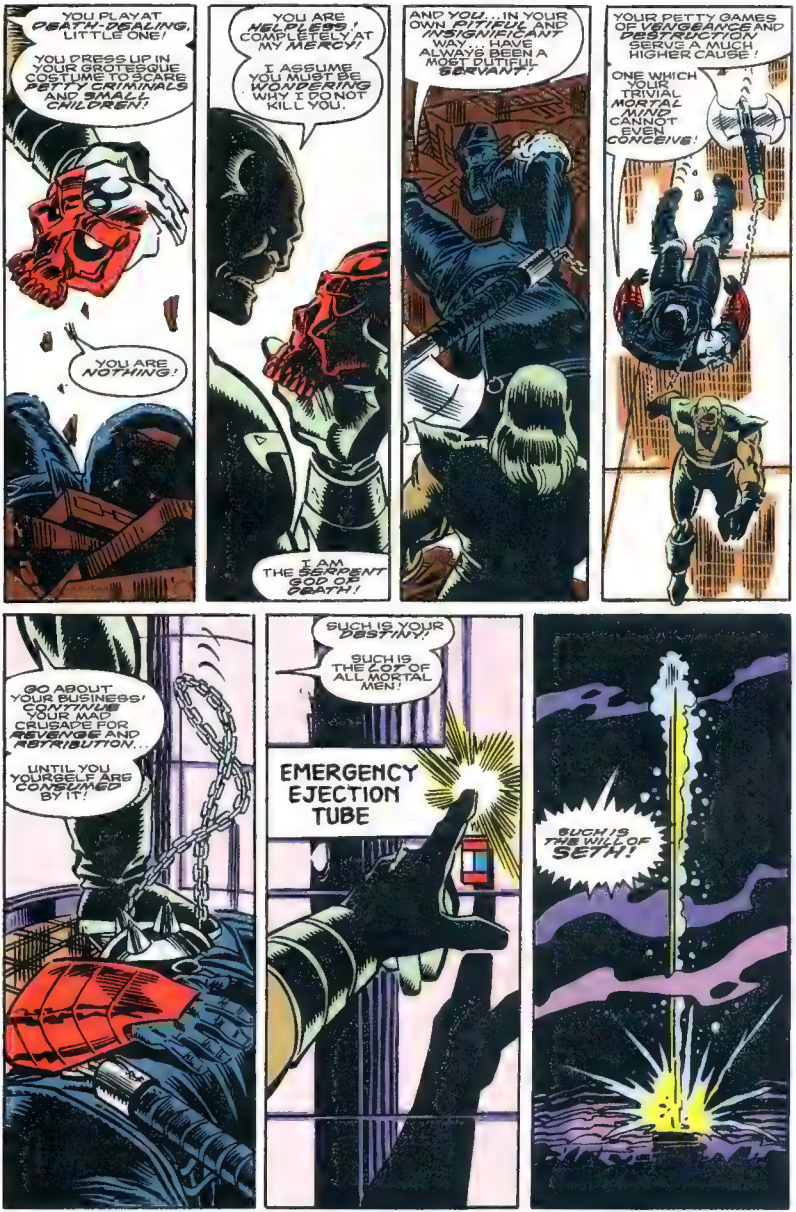
MEANWHILE, SOMEWHERE BENEATH THE HUDSON RIVER...
INCREDIBLE! THIS HIDDEN BASE IS EQUIPPED WITH THE MOST SOPHISTICATED WEAPONRY I HAVE EVER ENCOUNTERED!
POWERFUL ENOUGH TO TAX EVEN MY ENCHANTED POWER!
I WAS WISE TO JAM THE PNEUMATIC TUBE...SO THAT I COULD DEVOTE MY FULL ATTENTION TO THIS DEADLY GAUNTLET!
WHOEVER IT IS THAT COMMANDS THE SERPENT'S TEETH MAY PRESENT A FAR GREATER CHALLENGE THAN I--EH?
YOUR SKILL AND DARING IS MOST IMPRESSIVE, BLOODAXE!
WHO--?!
WHO STANDS AMID THE SHADOWS?

I AM KNOWN BY MANY NAMES IN MANY LANDS!
I AM THE FINAL FEAR OF ALL WHO LIVE!
I AM THE RAVAGER OF BOTH MAN AND GOD!
I AM THE DESTROYER OF WORLDS!
I AM SETH THE SERPENT-GOD OF DEATH!

THAT LITTLE LITANY WAS AS SUPERFLUOUS AS IT WAS SELF-SERVING!
AS FAR AS I AM CONCERNED, YOU AND YOUR HIRED THUGS ARE MERELY MAGGOTS WHO FEAST UPON THE INNOCENT!
AND YOU SHALL FEAST NO MORE!
IDIOT!
MANY--WITH FAR GREATER POWER--HAVE TRIED TO CONQUER DEATH!
ALL HAVE FAILED!
BUH-KOW!

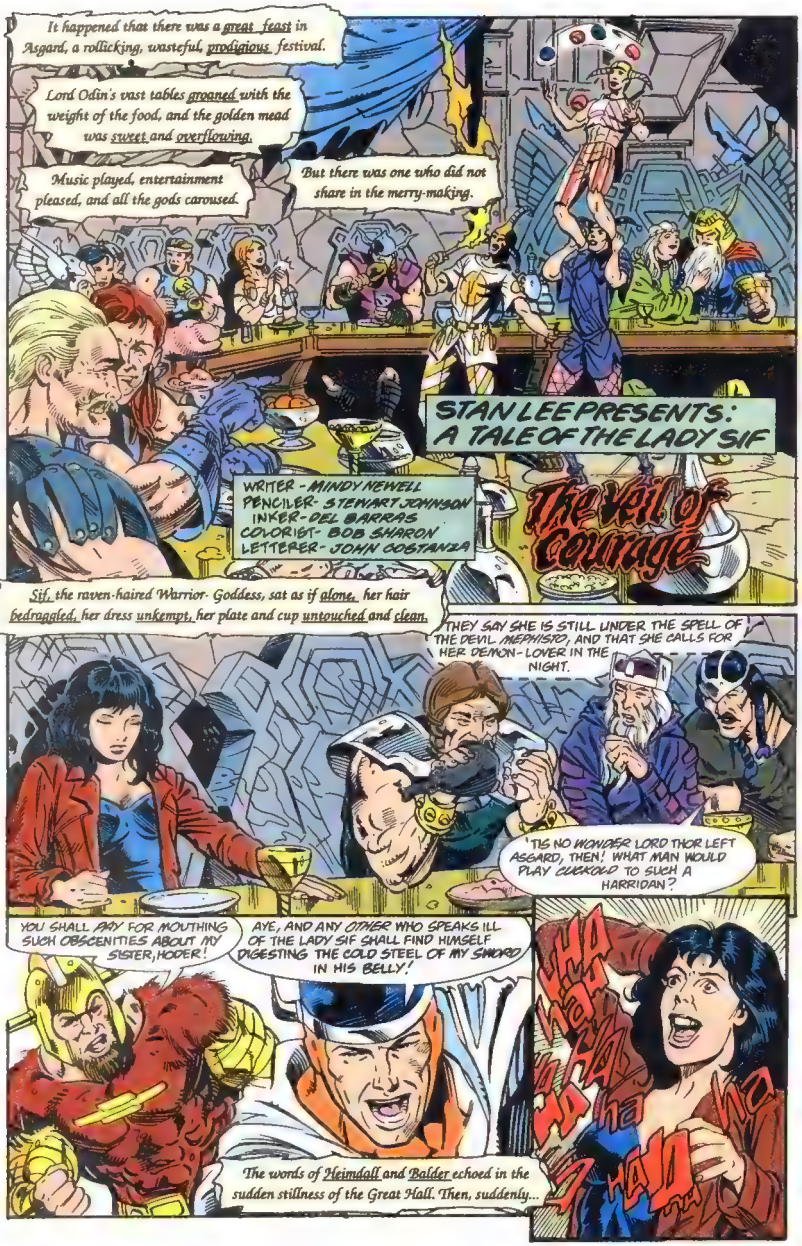

WHOA! SLOW DOWN, STELLARIS!
THIS WOMAN IS REALLY SMASH!... AND I'VE SEEN HER TAKE ON THE AVENGERS WITHOUT BATTING AN EYE!
AND I THOUGHT I HAD PROBLEMS!
LET'S ESTABLISH SOMETHING WE DO KNOW, WHETHER I'M IN THIS FORM OR PARADING AROUND AS THUNDERSTRIKE...
...YOU ALWAYS TREAT ME EXACTLY THE SAME!
WHY IS THAT?
YOU'RE STILL YOU, SILLY!
EVERYTHING ELSE IS JUST BAGGAGE!
EXACTLY! AND YOU ARE STILL YOU!
WHATEVER YOUR PAST, WHATEVER YOUR SECRETS... YOU ARE MY FRIEND! MY GOOD FRIEND!
THE REST WE'LL FIND OUT TOGETHER!
YOU HAVE SO MUCH YET TO LEARN, LITTLE ONE!
SMAAASH!
LIFE IS FULL OF CHAOS... AND FEAR!
I MERELY WISH TO END THE MAYHEM... AND BRING PEACE AND ORDER... AND THE ANARCHY WHICH IS AT THE VERY CORE... OF ALL EXISTENCE!
H-HE'S TOO POWERFUL! HIS SPEED IS AS FORMIDABLE... AS HIS STRENGTH!
ANOTHER BLOW LIKE THAT COULD FINISH ME!


HE'S JUST STANDING THERE--- TAUNTING ME--- DARING ME TO MAKE A MOVE!
BUT THIS BRIEF RESPITE WAS ALL I NEEDED TO REGAIN THE OFFENSIVE!
NOW IT'S MY TURN!
ONLY A MADMAN WOULD PROPOSE TO EXTINGUISH ALL LIFE!
BKRAKK!
A MADMAN... OR A GOD!
IS IT NOT A GREATER MADNESS TO EMBRACE THE DAILY TRAVAILS AND TRIVIALS OF EXISTENCE?
WHO IN HIS RIGHT MIND WOULD CONSCIOUSLY CHOOSE THE INNUMERABLE INSECURITIES... ANXIETY... HUMILIATIONS... OF EVERYDAY LIFE?!
CHOOM!
HE MOVES TOO FAST! I... CANNOT DEFEND MYSELF
UGNNNNN!


YOU PLAY AT DEATH-DEALING, LITTLE ONE!
YOU DRESS UP IN YOUR GROTESQUE COSTUME TO SCARE PETTY CRIMINALS AND SMALL CHILDREN!
YOU ARE NOTHING!
YOU ARE HELPLESS, COMPLETELY AT MY MERCY!
I ASSUME YOU MUST BE WONDERING WHY I DO NOT KILL YOU.
I AM THE SERPENT GOD OF DEATH!
AND YOU... IN YOUR OWN PITIFUL AND INSIGNIFICANT WAY... HAVE ALWAYS BEEN A MOST DUTIFUL SERVANT!
YOUR PETTY GAMES OF VENGEANCE AND DESTRUCTION SERVE A MUCH HIGHER CAUSE!
ONE WHICH YOUR TRIVIAL MORTAL MIND CANNOT EVEN CONCEIVE!
GO ABOUT YOUR BUSINESS, CONTINUE YOUR MAD CRUSADE FOR REVENGE AND RETRIBUTION...
UNTIL YOU YOURSELF ARE CONSUMED BY IT!
SUCH IS YOUR DESTINY!
SUCH IS THE LOT OF ALL MORTAL MEN!
EMERGENCY EJECTION TUBE
SUCH IS THE WILL OF SETH!

WHAT DO YOU SAY WE CALL IT A NIGHT, PRETTY LADY?
I'LL CATCH YOU TOMORROW. WE'LL START BY--
RINNGG!
WHO WOULD CALL AT SUCH AN UNGODLY HOUR? IT MUST BE AN EMERGENCY, OR--
OH, GOD!
KEVIN! SOMETHING'S HAPPENED TO KEVIN!
MASTERSON--!
THAT VOICE--!
M-MASTERSON--!
E-ERIC--!
I..
PHONE
I NEED YOU!
FOR THE NEXT SEVERAL SECONDS, AN UNHOLY CHILL SEEPS THROUGH ERIC MASTERSON AS HE LISTENS TO A VOICE GASPING IN PAIN... AND UNDISGUISED HORROR!
THAT WAS BLOODAXE! I'D BE BUT ISN'T HE SWORN TO KILL YOU?!
HE ALMOST HAD ON OCCASION! AND THAT ISN'T EVEN THE SCARY PART, PRINCESS...
BLOODAXE IS NEARLY UNSTOPPABLE IN HIS OWN RIGHT!
ANYONE WHO BEAT HIM SO MERCILESSLY...
...ANY BEING WHO WOULD HAND HIM SUCH A HUMILIATING DEFEAT...
...MUST BE ABSOLUTELY INVINCIBLE!

NEXT ISSUE: MY ENEMY... MY ALLY!! DON'T DARE MISS IT!!


It happened that there was a great feast in Asgard, a rollicking, wasteful, prodigious festival.
Lord Odin's vast tables groaned with the weight of the food, and the golden mead was sweet and overflowing.
Music played, entertainment pleased, and all the gods caroused.
But there was one who did not share in the merry-making.
STAN LEE PRESENTS: A TALE OF THE LADY SIF
WRITER - MINDY NEWELL
PENCILER- STEWART JOHNSON
INKER- DEL BARRAS
COLORIST- BOB SHARON
LETTERER- JOHN COSTANZA
The Veil of Courage
Sif, the raven-haired Warrior- Goddess, sat as if alone, her hair bedraggled, her dress unkempt, her plate and cup untouched and clean.
THEY SAY SHE IS STILL UNDER THE SPELL OF THE DEVIL MEPHISTO, AND THAT SHE CALLS FOR HER DEMON-LOVER IN THE NIGHT.
'TIS NO WONDER LORD THOR LEFT ASGARD, THEN! WHAT MAN WOULD PLAY CUCKOLD TO SUCH A HARRIDAN?
YOU SHALL PAY FOR MOUTHING SUCH OBSCENITIES ABOUT MY SISTER, HODER!
AYE, AND ANY OTHER WHO SPEAKS ILL OF THE LADY SIF SHALL FIND HIMSELF DIGESTING THE COLD STEEL OF MY SWORD IN HIS BELLY!
HA ha ha HA ha HA ha HA
The words of Heimdall and Balder echoed in the sudden stillness of the Great Hall. Then, suddenly...

Moving as one possessed, the Lady Sif rose up out of her seat, kicking aside the long table weighted with its offerings as if 'twere nothing but cobwebbing and dreams.
WHY IS IT SO HOT IN HERE??!
The gods of Asgard were silent, struck dumb with awe and fear...
... for a madwoman was amidst them.
LADY SIF, CONTROL THYSELF!
The word of Lord Odin was law.
Who would dare to disobey?
SHUT UP, OLD MAN!!
'Tis said that such was the rage of Lord Odin at that moment that the sun hid behind the moon, and that even Midgard shook with the might of Odin's anger.
But he commanded only that Sif be removed from his sight.
ART THOU MAD, HEIMDALL?! LET GO OF ME!!
'TIS NOT I WHO RAVES, POOR SISTER. BE SANE BUT FOR A MOMENT, I PRAY THEE, AND COME QUICKLY, 'FORE LORD ODIN ORDERS US BOTH TO BE PUT TO THE ARCHER'S ARROW.

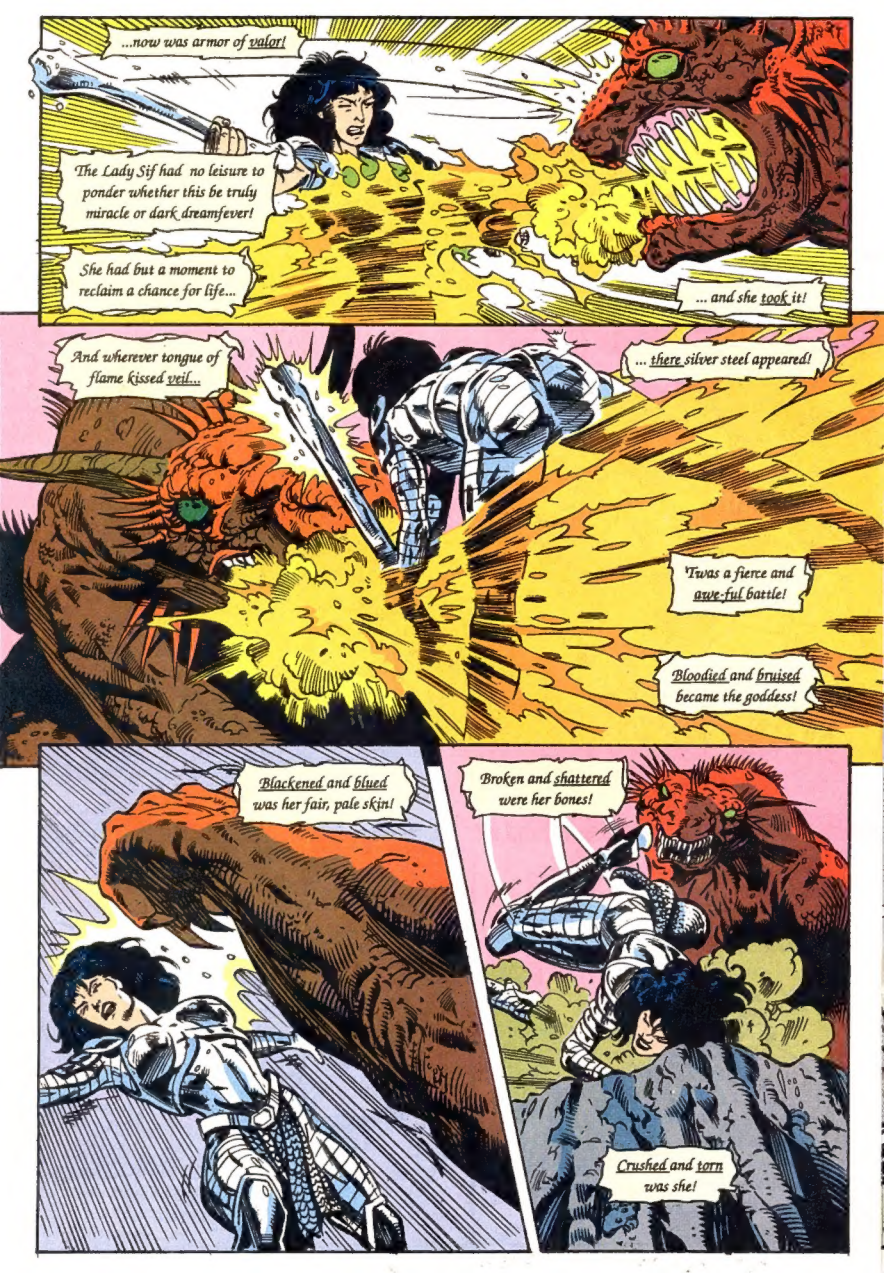
For a fortnight naught was seen nor heard from the Lady Sif, and the rumors ran rife.
THE LADY SIF, M'LORD, ASKS FOR AUDIENCE.
COME FORWARD AND BE RECOGNIZED, LADY.
Then, during the Horned moon Festival, when 'tis the right of all Asgardians to ask their lord for a boon and expect it granted...
The court held its collective breath. No one had ever spoken to odin as Sif had, and lived.
Would the Lord of Asgard order the death of his son's betrothed?
MY LORD, I BEG THEE FORGI--
ON MY SISTER'S BEHALF, ODIN, I WOULD ASK THEE FOR--
'TIS NAUGHT TO FORGIVE!
WE KNOW 'TWAS NOT TRULY THE LADY SIF WHO SPAT SUCH EVIL AT US IN THE GREAT HALL!
COME FORWARD, CHILD.
WHY DOST THOU WEAR THE VEIL OF COURAGE? WERE YOU AFRAID TO FACE US?
SIRE, I WOULD QUEST FOR THE NORN STONES.
THERE IS NO ONE HERE WHO HAS NOT FELT MY STRANGE BEHAVIOR OF LATE, ODIN, INCLUDING THYSELF.
'TIS SAID THE STONES CAN CURE ALL MANNERS OF TROUBLES.
PERHAPS THEY CAN CURE ME..
AYE.
SO LET IT BE WRITTEN, SO LET IT BE DONE!
I SHALL RETURN WHOLE, OR NOT AT ALL.

At the next daybreak, the gallant Warrior-Goddess of Asgard walked away from her life as she had known it.
Her provisions were minimal. She ate only what she could scavenge, and slept where she could find shelter.
In this way she traveled to the Desert of Yesterday's Bones.
She held back but for a moment.
And then...
,,, there was naught but yesterday's bones about her.
With the forests and greenery of Asgard behind her, a desolate, carcass-strewn path is all she is left to follow...
... a path she willingly follows.

There was no food, no water nor shelter. There was only the barren wilderness, dry and harsh.
She was lost in a land of extremes. Extreme heat, extreme cold, extreme thirst, extreme hunger, extreme exhaustion. Her white veil tattered and grayed. She became dirty and sunburned, her lips dry and blistered and swollen.
Darkness would drop down without warning, cold and black as sudden death.
Then, just as suddenly, 'twould again be bright midday.
But still Sif went forward.
Even crawling on her hands and knees, Sif went forward.
Inch by bloody inch, Sif moved forward.
As a lemming marches towards the sea, always forward.
And always the unchanging landscape of flat sand, bone trees, gristle leaves...
... until...
... like a mirage...
... the cave appeared.
But 'twas no mirage.

How long did the goddess sleep? 'Tis a secret still.
But 'tis known Sif was awakened by what seemed a terrible laughing, a crackling cackle that rumbled the sides of the cavern and opened crevices in its floor.
The voice of the cave forced Sif out of its mouth and back into the burning heat of yesterday's bones, where it continued to taunt her, whispering aloud all the fears in her heart, all the secrets of her soul.
COWARD! LIAR! FOOL!
Then self-defense grew in Sif's breast, until she shouted aloud...
I AM SIF, WARRIOR-GODDESS OF ASGARD! I HAVE, AND ALWAYS WILL DEFEND THE HONOR OF LORD ODIN AND MY BRETHREN!
'Twas a fierce, dreadful and terrifying beast, a giant behemoth that rose up out of the desert in a whirlwind of sand and an earthquake of tumbling rock!
'TIS AN EASY TASK TO BE BRAVE WHEN DRESSED IN ARMOR AND WEAPONS, WITH COMRADES BY ONE'S SIDE AND FOOD IN YOUR BELLY FOR STRENGTH.
BUT YOU WEAR NO ARMOR OR WEAPONS. I SEE NO COMRADES. I SEE A FRIGHTENED CHILD PLAYING WARRIOR, FEIGNING GODHOOD.
And its breath was licked with flame!
THEN PROVE YOURSELF!
Now the ground beneath Sif shook and became alive, and the stalactites were wet with drool, for the mouth of the cave was the hot, huge, dark mouth of the Norn Dragon!

As the roar of the monster rolled across the land, Asgardian and beast each took the measure of the other.
Then quiet descended and the universe was still.
But not for long.
There was a rise in the distance where Sif could make her stand.
Without weapons, weak with hunger and thirst, still she would honor Asgard with her death.
Even the Valkyries would sing of her gallantry and courage.
Yet quick as the goddess was, the dragon was quicker!
Its hot breath blasted the desert sand into glass!
Its fiery tongue burned away her veil to sear the flesh underneath!
But then did Sif wonder if she was not already dead, for 'twas a glint of silver which caught her eye, not charred,
Where torn linen had draped its shredded remnants was now a gleaming shoulder of steel!
Again the dragonflame reached out...
... and again, where once there was courage's veil...


...now was armor of valor!
The Lady Sif had no leisure to ponder whether this be truly miracle or dark dreamfever!
She had but a moment to reclaim a chance for life...
... and she took it!
And wherever tongue of flame kissed veil...
... there silver steel appeared!
'Twas a fierce and awe-ful battle!
Bloodied and bruised became the goddess!
Blackened and blued was her fair, pale skin!
Broken and shattered were her bones!
Crushed and torn was she!

P'rhaps 'twould have been more wise of her to take death's blow quickly and quietly and be done with it.
P'rhaps 'twas foolish of Sif to fight on, for 'tis true her cause seemed lost and hopeless.
And p'rhaps a lesser soul would have accepted such a fate.
But Sif was goddess-warrior born!
And death would not be proud this day!
Once more the dragonfire, but now Sif did stand her ground and did not flinch before the wave of heat...
... but held up her weapon of petrified bone to let the wave wash over it...
... and, lo, as cloth had turned to armor, bone became blade...
... a blade of hope!
Now Sif stood steady and took her mark.
And her aim was true!

Where lizard skin and leather wing had stood and threatened, naught was left but inanimate sand and dust.
And what had been bloody dragonheart was now three stones of shining ruby.
Three magical stones.
The three Norn stones.
Lips moving in praying, wondrous hope, Sif reached out and touched the stones with trembling fingers...
...and the madness was gone.
But her quest was still to be complete.
Then she stood on the Rainbow Bridge, and she recognized the face of the guardian of the bridge.
No more the troubling nightmares. No more the swinging, roiled moods. No more a shaded world of swirling grayness..
Holding the stones close, Sif whispered the secret words of passage.
'TWAS HER LOVING BROTHER, HEIMDALL WHOSE DUTY IT IS TO KEEP THE HIGH ROAD TO ASGARD SACRED AND SAFE.
AND JOYOUS WAS THEIR REUNION!
ARE THEE WELL AGAIN, SISTER?
AYE, HEIMDALL.
THANK THE STARS.
I WOULD ASK PERMISSION OF THEE TO CROSS THE BRIDGE INTO ASGARD, DEAR BROTHER, FOR I WOULD SEE HOME AGAIN BEFORE THIS DAY IS THROUGH.
AND I WOULD HAVE LORD ODIN KNOW THAT I AM MYSELF AGAIN. 'TWILL GIVE HIM HOPE, I THINK, THAT HIS SON, MY BELOVED, MAY BE CURED AS WELL.
GO, THEN, AND BE QUICK ABOUT IT!
And she was.
The End